



# REPORT FROM ELY: THE 2016 ANNUAL FAMILY LAW CONFERENCE

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The 2016 Family Law Conference of the State Bar of Nevada took place at the Bristlecone Convention Center in Ely, on March 2-3. The conference provided two days of education, training, idea-sharing and networking. More than 290 attendees engaged with members of the bar, members of the judiciary — including several Nevada Supreme Court justices — and several national speakers, resulting in one of the strongest and most well attended family law conferences in recent history. The theme was “Trial Preparation,” and the presentations focused on each aspect of trial, from opening statements to closing arguments. And, although it is sometimes difficult to develop programming that is relevant to all levels of expertise, according to feedback we received from seasoned trial lawyers and newer attorneys alike, the presentations this year contained something for everyone.

As always, the program began with Nuts and Bolts presented by Gary Silverman and Ed Kainen. During this presentation, newer attorneys learned family law practice basics, including the ins and outs of the initial consultation, pleadings, service of process and motion practice. The presentation also covered various discovery and trial methods and how to wrap up a case.

Daniel Polsenberg from Las Vegas gave an interesting “how to” presentation on the art of closing argument. In his presentation, participants learned how to marshal the evidence and synthesize it for the family court judge. Participants were also exposed to the parts of a closing argument (introduction, story, rebuttal, show and tell with exhibits and conclusion) and how to

prepare their closing arguments for family law trials.

National speakers John Lenderman, Esq., Patricia Kuendig, Esq. and Robert Simon, Ph.D. discussed opening statements, developing a theme and direct examination. All three presentations centered on the importance of implementing your overall case strategy throughout the various parts of trial.

Northern Nevada Discovery Commissioner Wes Ayers spoke on the pitfalls of discovery, primarily focusing on Rule 16.2, depositions and discovery objections.

Michael Kattelman from Reno told attendees how to effectively incorporate technology in a family

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## FAMILY LAW SECTION STEPS UP FOR PRO BONO AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING

This year at its annual conference in Ely, the Family Law Section made a special contribution on behalf of pro bono programs in the state. Section members and other attendees at the 2016 Annual Family Law Conference donated \$11,500 to the ONE Promise Nevada Campaign. The money will help the campaign provide legal aid to low-income individuals and to organizations serving low-income individuals.

The ONE Promise Nevada Campaign is a pro bono program created and sponsored by the Nevada Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission and the State Bar of Nevada. Its goal is to encourage every Nevada attorney to take just one pro bono case or participate in just one legal clinic each year.

Also at this year's conference, Nevada Supreme Court Justice Michael Douglas recognized attorneys for past service to thousands of Nevadans in need of legal aid. On behalf of the Access to Justice Commission, Douglas presented awards to the following members of the legal community:

- Kimberly Surratt, Surratt Law Practice, P.C. (northern Nevada)
- Kelly C. Brown, Kelly C. Brown, PLLC (eastern Nevada)
- Corinne Price, The Fine and Price Law Group (southern Nevada)
- Natalia Vander Laan, Vander Laan Law Firm, LLC (western Nevada)

The ONE Promise Nevada Campaign recently launched a new initiative called “Inspire One.” Inspire One is a pro bono ambassador program designed to spread the word about pro bono service in Nevada and to enlist other attorneys into pro bono service. **NL**

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law trial. Participants learned how to appropriately use technology to display or play evidentiary exhibits or demonstrative aids in family court.

Judge Charles Hoskin and Thomas Standish gave a presentation on rules of evidence and their application in a family law trial. They covered introduction and admission of exhibits, use of objections, hearsay and permissibility of demonstrative exhibits.

Jason Naimi from Las Vegas gave a presentation on cross-examination, during which participants learned the methodology behind an effective cross examination, including how to elicit favorable facts from witnesses and impeach the credibility of adverse witnesses.

Judge Weller and Bob Dickerson gave the ethics presentation this year. It covered a variety of ethical pitfalls and scenarios found in family law practice, including instances where your duties as officers of the court could potentially conflict with your duties to your client.

This year marked our first whiskey tasting at the Postal Palace. What a fun night! Sponsored by Seven Troughs Distilling Co. (owned by Tom Adams), the event served up great food and libations to a packed house. Thank you to Kim Surratt for planning this enjoyable event.

At the annual banquet, Bob Cerceo, of Surratt Law in Las Vegas, received the Kapalka Award, created by the Family Law Section Executive Council in honor of the late William Kapalka. Kapalka dedicated his career to pro bono service in southern Nevada. The award recognizes family law attorneys who have provided or enabled direct legal services to individual, low-income clients and client groups, or to nonprofit organizations whose primary purpose is to provide free services to the poor or disadvantaged, without expectation of compensation. The need for pro bono representation in Nevada and in the area of family law seems greater than ever. Bob's dedication to providing equal access to justice to

indigent members of society is remarkable. Thank you to Bob for stepping up to the plate and thank you to the law firms that have supported him in doing so.

But the Pillar Award presentation took center stage at the annual banquet. Each year the Family Law Section recognizes a member who has demonstrated outstanding leadership and contributed to the advancement of family law. This year we honored Reno lawyer, Mary Anne Decaria, who retired from private practice in 2015 due to health reasons. Reno lawyers Gary Silverman and Michael Kattelman of the law firm of Silverman, Kattelman & Springgate (formerly Silverman, Decaria & Kattelman), her long-time business partners, presented Decaria with the award. Their presentation was both touching and uplifting. They spoke of Decaria's contributions to their firm and her dedication to the practice of law. Decaria accepted the award on her own behalf and gave a very moving speech regarding her long career as a family law attorney, and her current battle with early-onset Alzheimer's. After a well-deserved standing ovation, there was not a dry eye in the house. Thank you again, Mary Anne, for your contributions to our section. All our best to you and to your family.

Finally, every year there is talk of moving the family law conference away from Ely to a new, but similar location with the same small town feel. Although we love Ely, we may be outgrowing it. We are discussing this idea for next year and developing a survey that will be sent to section members soon. We hope you will give us your input. Our conference is special and we all want to keep it that way. **NL**



**JESSICA ANDERSON** is managing partner of Anderson Keuscher PLLC, a boutique family law firm in Reno. Anderson currently serves as chair of the Executive Council of the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Nevada.

# Thank you

to the 2016 Family Law Exhibitors.

